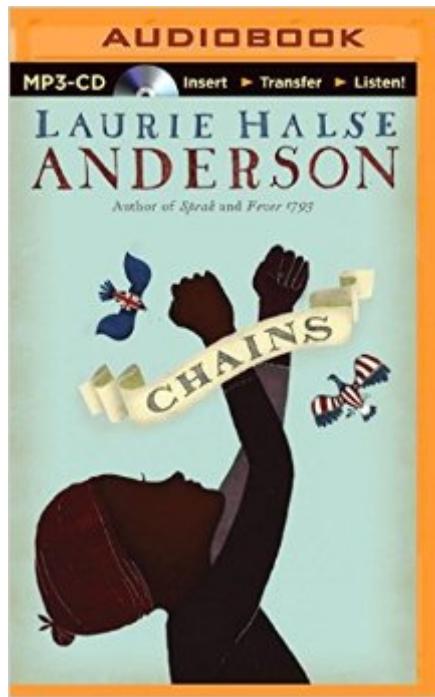


The book was found

# Chains (Chains Series)



## **Synopsis**

As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight...for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth, in a cruel twist of fate become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons, who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on her owners, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom. From acclaimed author Laurie Halse Anderson comes this compelling, impeccably researched novel that shows the lengths we can go to cast off our chains, both physical and spiritual. Winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award 2009

## **Book Information**

Series: Chains Series (Book 1)

MP3 CD

Publisher: Brilliance Audio; MP3 Una edition (October 28, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1491574623

ISBN-13: 978-1491574621

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.5 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (332 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #403,591 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #72 inÂ  Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary Periods #201 inÂ  Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Military #12910 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction

## **Customer Reviews**

CHAINS by Laurie Halse Anderson tells the story of Isabel, a slave trapped in New York City in the early days of the Revolution. Sold to Loyalists when her former owner dies, she's offered the chance to spy for the Patriots. But does their talk of liberty really include her? What about the British, who promise freedom to slaves who join their fight against the rebels? This book is impeccably researched in a way that not only convinced me I was getting "the real deal" as far as the historical details are concerned but also transported me straight back into the 18th century. Some historical novels that have tackled this issue in the past have made it overly simple, but CHAINS is different.

The historical context isn't simplified, the Patriot cause isn't glorified, and the characters are flawed, complex, and rich. As a reader and as a teacher, I am in serious book-love. As soon as I read the advance reader copy, I made plans to use this novel in my 7th grade classroom. CHAINS is a well-researched look at choices made by individuals during the Revolution, a coming-of-age story for a girl and a nation, and an absolute page-turner. It's everything that historical fiction ought to be.

The heroine in Laurie Halse Anderson's gripping new middle level children's book, "Chains" is a thirteen year old slave named Isabel, headstrong, fierce in her determination to keep her epileptic sister Ruth with her, intuitive, and strong. What might fell the mightiest of people only serves to strengthen Isabel, time and time again, proving that determination was much needed during this turbulent time in our nation's history. "Chains" is the children's book of the year. It's that good. Anderson's blending of a slave story with the the Revolutionary War and the battle of New York creates a story ripe with possibilities and is fresh and new. At the beginning of the story, Isabel and Ruth attend the funeral of their former owner, thinking that a will would give them freedom. Alas, it was not to be. An unscrupulous relative sells off the girls to the first customers, a pair of England loyalists named Lockton, who transport the pair to their New York home to serve them. Immediately off the boat, Isabel befriends a spritely lad Curzon, who begs to employ her in the cause of the American Revolution, playing brilliantly on the fact that white society deemed black slaves to be invisible. Only wanting her freedom, Isabel promises nothing but soon delivers, after learning of a plot to kill General Washington. When that doesn't give her freedom, she begins to mistrust the patriots' cause, and learns of the British claim to ensure freedom to any slaves that would join up against the revolution. What makes this book novel is a slavery story set, not in the south, but New York City, which naturally leads to the discussion of how slavery was in our early history throughout the country and not just in one area. It also plays with the themes of which "side" in a war is the good side? Is there a good side or a bad side in a battle? We are taught that the British are the bad guys. Would you feel that way if you were a slave and could get freedom from them? Many events transpire in this amazing book, but just look at the themes that crop up so far: racial invisibility, the British as possibly the "good guys" in the Revolution, the horrors of slavery against the strength of the people who suffered under it. Any of these themes would be a rich discussion to have with kids. Books like these tend to make the history we all learned in school much more real, more deeper, than just a series of dates and numbers to remember. We forget that history is made up of stories, of sides, and "Chains" allows some gentle exploration of those themes. This is the first book I've read of Anderson. Her writing style is brief, fast paced, and complete. As a teacher, I appreciate the

short chapters that pack a lot of story into a few pages. This would be an excellent read aloud book for any fourth grade classroom or higher, who are studying these issues in the class. I would love to use this book as a literature study, when it become available in paperback. And I'm now officially a fan of her work, and can't wait to delve into her other books. Why the Newbery committee passed this stunning novel up is beyond me. I've read the current winner of the Newbery, *The Graveyard Book*, and while I found it to be interesting and intriguing, in my opinion, *Chains* soars above and beyond this book. If you are a teacher, buy this book now. It's really that good.

I am 11 years old and I liked this book because it writes from a first person perspective and that makes it more fun to read at least for me because you can tell what their feelings are. I also think the end of the book sets it up perfectly for the second book, *Forge*. The author clearly did a lot of research for this book and the next, which makes the book even more realistic even though the most of the characters aren't real. I also like that she did incorporate some true figures.

Love this book! I used it as a read aloud and used some sections for close reading with my 5th grade class. Before sharing it with my class, I couldn't put it down. I myself learned a lot about the American Revolution, and it was refreshing to hear history from the viewpoint of marginalized people, whose voices are generally not represented. I can't wait for part 3- *Ashes*.

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